

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 016891

EXDIS FOR AMBASSADOR VAKY FROM AMB BUNKER

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PEPR, PN

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT PEREZ' OFFER TO SENATOR BAKER TO
ORGANIZE LA COUNTRIES TO GUARANTEE CANAL TREATY
THROUGH 2000

1. WE HAVE NOTED WITH MISGIVINGS CAP'S PROPOSAL (REFTTEL)
TO TAKE THE LEAD IN ORGANIZING THE SUPPORT OF OTHER LA
COUNTRIES IN "GUARANTEEING THE TREATIES THROUGH THE
YEAR 2000" THROUGH ANOTHER OAS MEETING OF PRESIDENTS IN
WASHINGTON TO SIGN A DOCUMENT IN THAT REGARD.

2. WE UNDERSTAND HIS DESIRE TO BE HELPFUL, AND APPRE-
CIATE HIS FORCEFUL ADVOCACY FOR THE TREATIES AS THEY
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STAND IN DISCUSSIONS WITH SENATORS BAKER AND GARN. HIS
CONCERN ABOUT THE RISKS OF TRYING TO AMEND THE TREATIES
IN THE SENATE IS ONE WE SHARE. THAT IS THE REASON WE
WOULD RATHER THAT HE NOT INTRODUCE A NEW IDEA IN THE DEBATE
THAT COULD COMPLICATE OUR EFFORT TO GET THE TREATIES
APPROVED BY THE SENATE WITHOUT CHANGES REQUIRING A NEW
PLEBISCITE IN PANAMA.

3. HIS PROPOSAL FOR A LATIN AMERICAN GUARANTEE OF THE BASIC TREATY WOULD, WE BELIEVE, PROLONG THE DEBATE AND INCREASE THE POSSIBILITY OF STARTING AN UNRAVELING PROCESS THAT WOULD REDUCE PROSPECTS FOR A SETTLEMENT OF THE CANAL ISSUE. PROSPECTS NOW ARE IMPROVING FOR SENATE APPROVAL OF THE TREATIES WITHOUT SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES. (THE PRESIDENT'S CALL FOR PASSAGE OF THE TREATIES IN THE STATE OF THE UNION SPEECH WAS WIDELY APPLAUDED BY THE CONGRESS LAST NIGHT.) CAP'S STRONG ENDORSEMENT HAS BEEN AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE GROWING SUPPORT FOR THE TREATIES.

4. IN THE LETTER TO SENATOR BAKER, HE WOULD, AT THIS STAGE, BE MOST HELPFUL BY STRESSING AGAIN THE IMPORTANCE OF PASSING THE TREATIES WITHOUT SUBSTANTIVE MODIFICATION, RATHER THAN BY OFFERING TO ADD A NEW DOCUMENT GUARANTING THE TREATY ARRANGEMENT. IF HE WISHES, HE COULD OFFER TO USE HIS LEADERSHIP IN SUPPORT OF THE PROTOCOL TO THE NEUTRALITY TREATY AFTER RATIFICATION.

5. YOU MAY DRAW ON THE ABOVE, AS YOU WISH, IN DISCUSSING THE TREATY SITUATION WITH HIM. YOU MAY ASSURE HIM OF OUR RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION FOR THE POSITIVE, LEADING ROLE HE PLAYED THROUGHOUT THE DIFFICULT PROCESS OF TRYING TO RESOLVE THE CANAL ISSUE. CHRISTOPHER
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